

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room No. 1 Shirehall, Hereford on Monday, 13th June, 2005 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:	Councillor	A.C.R. Chappell (Chairman)
	Councillor	H. Bramer (Vice Chairman)
	Councillors	R.B.A. Burke, M.R. Cunningham, Mrs. S.P.A. Daniels, J.G.S. Guthrie, B. Hunt, D.C. Taylor, P.G. Turpin and A.L. Williams
	Co-opted Members	G. Jones (Tourism Sector) and Mrs. E. Newman (Herefordshire Association of Local Council's)

In attendance: Councillors Mrs. P.A. Andrews, Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J. Stone and R.M. Wilson

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs C. Jones and Mr. A. Curless.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Mrs. P.A. Andrews	6 – Castle Green Regeneration Project	Personal
Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes	8 – Youth Service	Personal

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes for the meeting of the former Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd March 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

The Chairman invited the members of the public present to suggest items for the Committee to scrutinise in the future.

Following a suggestion that the Committee scrutinise the County's Museums the Committee agreed to note the suggestion and consider adding it to its work programme.

6. CASTLE GREEN REGENERATION PROJECT

Members were advised on the current position in respect of the Hereford Castle Green Regeneration Project.

The Parks and Countryside Manager informed the Committee of a number of initiatives to regenerate the Castle Green area in light of the decision not to proceed with a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for park restoration. These initiatives amounted to over £1m and included cleansing the Castle Pool, renovation of the Victoria footbridge, refurbishment of the public toilets and other smaller scale funding bids.

The HLF bid had been withdrawn for a number of reasons, which included:

- High cost of preparing a bid.
- A less than 50% chance of a successful outcome.
- Other corporate priorities.
- A possibly compromising situation with HLF. Both the Cathedral Close project and Friar Street Heritage Resource and Learning Centre are set to make bids to HLF.

The Parks and Countryside Manager reported that £30,000, which was going to be used to fund feasibility work for the HLF bid, had now been redirected towards minor improvements on the Castle Green including the refurbishment of Nelson's Column in time for the bicentenary celebrations of the Battle of Trafalgar.

With regard to the cleansing work due to be undertaken at the Castle Pool, the Parks and Countryside Manager highlighted the number of outside agencies consulted and extensive preparation work that had delayed the cleansing project. After much behind the scenes work he now anticipated the work taking place over a two-week period in autumn 2005.

The Committee was informed that the toilet block refurbishment at the Castle Green was the responsibility of the Highways and Transportation Department. The block was scheduled to be refurbished during 2006/07.

The Chairman welcomed invitees from Friends of Castle Green, Castle Street and District Residents Association and St. James and Bartonsham Community Association. He thanked them for accepting his invitation to attend the meeting and gave them the opportunity to present their comments on the Castle Green Regeneration Project to the Committee.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- The local community should be consulted regarding any redevelopment of the Castle Green area. The Friends of the Castle Green wanted a 30-year plan to be drawn up between the community and the Council to redevelop the Castle Green. The Parks and Countryside Manager reported that the Council was keen to work with the local community and that outside consultants had only been used to satisfy the requirements of the HLF.
- Part of the Hospital Walk footpath had been cleaned and exposed to reveal its original form. Many years of progressive silt build up from flooding had led to the feature being partially lost from public view.
- Refurbishment of the Victoria footbridge should be a priority as it is a key pedestrian route connecting the north and south sides of the City.
- £10,000 to support initiatives in the local area gained by the Council from the developers of the Victoria Park estate had yet to be spent.

A view was expressed that part of the revenue gained from car parking could be

used to redevelop the Castle Green.

The Head of Service (Policy and Community) informed the meeting that whilst unfortunately the redevelopment of the Castle Green had had to make way for other Council capital programme priorities at this time, this should not rule out any significant redevelopment in the future, including the potential for making a HLF bid.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. PROPOSED REVIEW ON HOW TO RETAIN OR ATTRACT 18-35 YEAR OLDS TO HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee considered the scoping statement for a scrutiny review into how to retain 18-35 year olds to Herefordshire or attract them to the County, a copy of which had been included at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Chairman proposed that the whole Committee should form the Review Group for this wide-ranging and varied scrutiny review. The 18-35 year old age range was vital to the economic development of Herefordshire and he wanted the review to ask tough and searching questions about every possible aspect that could influence the County's ability to attract and retain this age group. He anticipated that the review would take approximately one year to complete.

The Committee discussed the proposed scrutiny review and the following are the principal points raised during discussion:

- Members were advised that demographically Herefordshire was under-represented in the 15-29 year old age range compared to regional and national statistics.
- Salaries, housing and the retail sector were considered important aspects that the review should investigate.
- It was important to investigate all types of employment including skilled, unskilled and graduate roles.

It was proposed that to enable the Review Group to discuss the review and consider potential areas of investigation, a workshop meeting should be arranged by the Review Groups Lead Officer.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the Scoping Statement for a scrutiny review on how to retain and attract 18-35 year olds to Herefordshire, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;

(b) all Members of Community Services Scrutiny Committee be appointed to the Review Group;

(c) Councillor A.C.R. Chappell be appointed as Chairman of the Review Group;

and

(d) a workshop for the Review Group be arranged.

8. YOUTH SERVICE

Members were updated on the role of the Community Youth Service (CYS), its contribution to the priorities of the Council and the challenges it faced in 2005/06.

The Head of Service (Policy and Community) informed the Committee that the CYS was currently carrying no staff vacancies after the recent employment of trainees and a minor reorganisation. However, it was still likely that the service would not meet the nationally expected targets in the forthcoming year.

The Head of Service (Policy and Community) stated that the CYS was to receive an Ofsted inspection in the late summer 2005 and an enhanced inspection under the Joint Area Review as part of the wider Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the whole Council.

The Committee was also updated on the Green Paper, which was now expected in summer 2005, concerning the Youth Service, arrangements for Connexions centres and their future development. The Green Paper expected to recommend that the CYS form a part of the newly formed Children's Services Directorate.

A view was expressed that the CYS should work alongside the voluntary organisations providing youth facilities in the County and that the CYS should make more efforts to 'grow their own' youth workers.

It was also reported that the CYS was working closely with the Children's Services Directorate to facilitate the Extended Schools Initiative.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9. POLICY AND COMMUNITY DIRECTORATE 2004/05 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (OUTTURNS)

Members were informed of the performance of the non-corporate functions of the Policy and Community Directorate against their national and local performance indicators for 2004/05, detailing the main areas of activity undertaken and improvements made by those services during the year.

The following are the principal points of the ensuing discussion:

- There had been a 2% increase in the number of Council owned play areas deemed to be above low risk. It was expected that next year, due to scheduled playground refurbishments, that it would be possible to report a 10% increase in the number of Council owned play areas assessed to be low risk or below.
- Any refurbishment of play areas would require the new equipment provided to be in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Part 3. The Parks and Countryside Manager agreed to supply a Member with information on how play area equipment was designed to meet the requirements of the DDA Part 3.
- It was acknowledged that the proliferation of play areas, secured through Section 106 planning agreements, had increased the pressure on budgets to maintain play areas and it was suggested that maintenance charges could be added to section 106 agreements.
- It was suggested that a possible way to reduce vandalism of play areas would be by placing more responsibility for maintenance on the communities which they served.
- It was reported that there had been no successful claims against the Council for

injuries on Council owned play areas in the last two years. However, there had been an increase in the number of opportunist claims filed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7:46 p.m.

CHAIRMAN